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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 003219

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DEPT FOR AF, AF/W, AF/RA  
EUCOM FOR DCINC AND POLAD LADESMA

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TAGS: [PREL](#), [MASS](#), [NI](#), [ECOWAS](#)

SUBJECT: ECOWAS: KOUYATE TOUR D'HORIZON

REF: A. STATE 210672

[B](#). FREETOWN 1559

[C](#). FREETOWN 1568

[D](#). ABUJA 3207

(U) Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter; Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: During a December 7 meeting with Ambassador Jeter, ECOWAS Executive Secretary Lansana Kouyate provided a tour d'horizon of sub-regional issues, including Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the upcoming ECOWAS Summit. While noting recent hiccups on disarmament, Kouyate was optimistic about Sierra Leone. He was less sanguine about reconciliation in Liberia. He expressed strong concern about Guinea-Bissau's President Yala, and hoped to convene a mini-Summit on Guinea-Bissau on the margins of the ECOWAS Summit in Dakar. Kouyate stated that his initial concern about Wade's ascension to the ECOWAS Chair had been allayed. Other major issues on the Summit agenda include terrorism, human trafficking, and sub-regional harmonization. His remarks on his own future are reported septel (Ref D). END SUMMARY.

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[1](#)2. (C) Kouyate expressed some concern about reports of recalcitrance in carrying out disarmament in the diamond producing areas; he ventured that the foot-dragging was born of uncertainty. If the RUF disarms, they have an uncertain future. Electoral prospects are nil because the RUF is singularly unpopular. Kouyate was unsure if the recent hesitance was a major tear in the disarmament process or a last-gasp attempt to wrench more assistance from the international community before disarming (see also Ref B and C). Unsure of the magnitude of the foot-dragging, Kouyate planned to speak with President Kabbah and SRSG Adeniji. He also noted some concern that, because of the intensified fighting in Lofa County, Taylor might press the RUF to slow down the DDR process.

[1](#)3. (C) SPECIAL COURT: The temporal jurisdiction of the Court had been discussed during his recent visit to New York, but without resolution. Kouyate was unconcerned about the delay, believing it serendipitous. He asserted that the disarmament process should be completed before the Court starts its work. Otherwise, the prospect of looming criminal prosecution would cause many RUF combatants to balk at disarmament. (COMMENT: Kouyate did not seem to be aware of the recent decision by the GOSL, bringing closure to this issue. END COMMENT).

[1](#)4. (C) RUF LEADERSHIP: The RUF appeared to be fragmenting as the peace process moved forward. According to Kouyate, this fragmentation was in some ways a good sign, although it complicated dialogue with the RUF. Issa Sessay, since he led the largest group of fighters, was the most important person in the hierarchy but seemed incapable of consolidating the RUF. Omre Golley had resigned his role as the spokesman, but this was only a game to garner funds and attention, Kouyate said. As soon as money was dangled, Golley's ambition and avarice would compel his return to the fold.

[1](#)5. (C) RUF AND AL-QAIDA: Kouyate said ECOWAS simply did not have the intelligence capabilities to investigate the Washington Post article. Guinea's Conte called the report true, but Conte's response was visceral and not likely based on fact, Kouyate chuckled. The Post article probably would be discussed at the Summit by Obasanjo, Kabbah, Konare and Conte. Kouyate asked the USG to share information on this issue with ECOWAS; without it, there was little ECOWAS could do. He did note that if Ibrahim Bah were involved in illicit transfers of diamonds, the center of the operation was

Ouagadougou.

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LIBERIA - SANCTIONS AND RECONCILIATION

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16. (C) Kouyate recalled a recent meeting where President Taylor had agreed to participate in an all-Liberia Conference outside of the country. The non-Liberia site was needed to attract key Liberian political figures who had been charged with treason by Taylor, including Ellen Sirleaf Johnson and Alhaji Kromah, who were too uncomfortable to return home despite the dismissal of the charges against them. Taylor agreed to free more political prisoners before the conference began. As a result, Kouyate had sent Taylor a missive outlining a two-day conference. The first day would be among opposition parties, and the second day would involve everyone, including Taylor, Konare and Obasanjo. Only a few days ago, Foreign Minister Monie Captan had called, saying that Taylor, despite his earlier acquiescence, now furiously objected to an all inclusive conference outside of Liberia because it would give implicit recognition to those fighting in Lofa County. Captan was embarrassed.

17. (C) Liberians were tired of suffering because of Taylor's venal leadership. Kouyate added that fighting in Lofa County was growing, with some of it not attributed to the LURD. Clashes between the army and Taylor's Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) had also intensified. The army was incensed about having to fend for itself, and not being paid, while the ATU was relatively flush with money and equipment.

18. (C) SANCTIONS: Kouyate stated that the Liberia sanctions were having an effect. First, Taylor did not like anything that diminished his self-perception before other Heads of State. The psychological impact was telling. Second, the Liberian dollar had precipitously declined against its U.S. counterpart. Finally, the travel ban was having a significant impact. Most states were enforcing the measure, Kouyate said. Ghana was going a step further, even sending back suspicious Liberians although their names were not on the list.

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GUINEA-BISSAU

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19. (C) Kouyate expressed strong concern about the situation in Guinea-Bissau. President Yala was becoming increasingly erratic and irrational. Yala had arrested numerous perceived opponents in what appeared to be a contrived coup threat. President Konare had sent an envoy to restore some balance, but the emissary was rebuffed by Yala. Wade and Obasanjo were also concerned, and had offered to send envoys. Kouyate had asked Obasanjo and Konare, who had planned a "drop in" visit on Yala, to wait. He believed that a mini-Summit on the margins of the ECOWAS Summit might provide a better forum for a discussion, and appear less of a threat to Yala. Kouyate underscored the need to calm Yala and harness tensions in Guinea-Bissau -- lest the distemper spill into Cassamance to everyone's chagrin.

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DAKAR SUMMIT DATES, TOPICS, AND OUTCOME

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10. (C) Kouyate explained the Summit schedule: the technical level meetings would take place on December 15-16, followed by the Ministerial on December 17. Heads of State would assemble on December 20-21. In addition to sub-regional security issues, the Summit would also address human trafficking, further harmonization between ECOWAS and UEMOA, and terrorism. Ambassador Jeter passed the Executive Secretary a list showing the implementation status of the

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dozen major counter-terrorism conventions by all sub-regional states. Kouyate reviewed the document carefully, noting that it would be a useful basis for discussions on terrorism at the Summit.

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THE NEXT CHAIRMAN - NO LONGER AN UNGUIDED MISSILE

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11. (C) Kouyate acknowledged that Wade would take the ECOWAS

Chair. Wade was selected despite initial apprehension by some, including Kouyate himself. Kouyate was convinced that Wade could do well for ECOWAS. Describing Wade as an "unguided missile" at times, Kouyate explained that he had recently met the Senegalese leader, who had not been adequately informed of ECOWAS efforts towards regional economic integration. After briefing him privately for two hours, Kouyate was no longer concerned that Wade would short-change ECOWAS in favor of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). According to Kouyate, Wade's reluctance to fully embrace ECOWAS was understandable in part. In ECOWAS, Senegal is not *primus inter pares* given the presence of Nigeria and Ghana. In UEMOA, Senegal is the heavyweight. "It is better to be the head of a cat than the tail of a tiger," Kouyate quipped. As long as the ECOWAS Secretariat maintained close contact with Wade, Kouyate said,

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he would do fine. In fact, Wade's leadership of ECOWAS may be very timely. Wade is singularly positioned to provide the leadership that bridges the gap between ECOWAS and UEMOA and to eliminate redundancy between the two organizations.

112. (C) Kouyate showed Jeter a Note from the Russian Embassy requesting accreditation to ECOWAS for Russia's Ambassador to Nigeria, and sought Ambassador Jeter's reaction. Ambassador Jeter thanked Kouyate, noting that the U.S. also hoped to present its request for accreditation to ECOWAS in the very near future.

113. (C) COMMENT: Kouyate was open and relaxed, clearly close to the end of his very successful tenure as ECOWAS Executive Secretary. As he heads off, Kouyate believes ECOWAS is

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stronger now than when it was handed to him. We agree.

114. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: Now that the Konare-Kouyate duo is preparing its exit from the ECOWAS epicenter, it will be imperative to engage Wade and the new Executive Secretary -- who will be selected at the Summit -- as early as possible. The U.S. worked well with Konare and Kouyate and we got good mileage from our efforts. We must now seek an even stronger relationship with those who are taking charge. END COMMENT. Jeter